

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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## **PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS CONCLUDE AS BALD EAGLE NUMBERS SOAR**

By Lowell Washburn  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

“Watch it. There he goes. He looks serious.”

The exuberant proclamation came from eagle watcher, Sue Baker. Her summons provided a heads up for the hardy group of camera and binocular-clad wildlife enthusiasts who gathered last weekend along the snowy shoreline of the Des Moines River at Red Rock Reservoir, near Pella.

Within an instant, all eyes had become riveted on the magnificent full plumaged, adult bald eagle rapidly approaching the open tailwaters located below the Red Rock Dam. Upon reaching the river, the bird hovered briefly and then made its final decent. With a single deft swing of its talon tipped feet, the huge raptor effortlessly snagged a fish from the frigid waters.

As the eagle winged its way to a nearby dining perch, the crowd boisterously cheered its success. It was a fitting tribute for an event whose focus was all about success. Not just the success of a single eagle catching its lunch, but rather the success of an entire species ---- the dramatic return of our national emblem, the American bald eagle.

It seemed entirely appropriate that the scene would mark the official conclusion of this winter's statewide, 12-event tour of Iowa Bald Eagle Days. Public participation during this year's events was bigger and better than ever. At most locations, crowds averaged around 2,500 per day. At the Quad Cities, an incredible 18,000 eagle watchers turned out to join the celebration.

The eagle's recovery has been an incredible saga. In 1977, with the species still reeling from its near fatal bout with DDT contaminants, the first nesting pair of bald eagles returned to Iowa. During the summer of 1985, the number of nests increased from two to four. From there, the recovery really began to catch fire as eagle numbers soared. Last summer, more than 200 bald eagle nesting territories were documented across 81 Iowa counties.

Iowa's population of wintering eagles has steadily grown as well. This year, just over 4,000 eagles were tallied during the mid-winter count. The best news is that a full 40 percent of those wintering birds were immature --- signifying a healthy and still growing population.

The bald eagle's return carries a powerful environmental message and is not just something for avid birders to enjoy. It is an event that should be celebrated by each and every Iowan.

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## **NORTH IOWA BECOMES HEN HOUSE SUPER SITE**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Thanks to a cooperative joint venture between the Manitoba, Canada based Delta Waterfowl Foundation, the Iowa DNR, and the Waterfowl Association of Iowa, breeding pairs of mallard ducks will find a noticeable increase in secure nesting sites as they return to Iowa wetlands later this month.

According to DNR Waterfowl Technician, Al Hancock, the conservation partnership calls for the installation of 500 artificial mallard nesting structures during the next five years. Known as Delta Hen Houses, the structures are an 18-inch diameter, three-foot-long wire cylinder covered in flax straw and lined with softer nesting material. When installed over water, the structures offer a safe haven from egg eating predators such as mink and raccoons. The pilot project is focused on wetlands surrounding Clear Lake and represents the first *Hen House Super-Site* attempted in Iowa.

"Right now, we're in the process of installing the first 100 structures," said Hancock. "The nests are being placed on public areas, and we're targeting the smaller prairie pothole-type wetlands that nesting mallards prefer. As the project takes off, we'll

be monitoring those structures for usage and success.”

During future years, the Iowa DNR will maintain the structures annually by replacing the nesting material, said Hancock.

In a previous Iowa trial experiment, artificial nesting cylinders received 70 percent use by mallard ducks, and enjoyed a 70 to 87 percent rate of success. The structures are considered to be an effective way to aid in bolstering local mallard populations.

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## **DNR HOPEFUL LOST GROVE LAKE CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN IN 2009**

During a public meeting at Davenport North Scott High School in January 2004, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials believed a contract to construct the Lost Grove Lake dam would be let later that year.

“It has been a frustrating four years,” said Martin Konrad, fisheries biologist with the Iowa DNR. “We really thought all bases were covered only to find out that the dam had to be classified as high risk and designed to meet more stringent U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service requirements because there was an existing residence below the dam, and the potential for future development.”

Concerns from the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) of the original dam design included the location of the emergency spillway, subsoil conditions, and groundwater conditions. Subsoil and groundwater conditions required additional field exploration and laboratory analysis. Meeting FWS requirements is necessary in obtaining federal funding to construct the dam and facilities needed to meet public use.

The DNR is nearing consensus with the FWS reviewers which will allow the DNR to go forward with a dam redesign that meets their requirements. The goal is to award a construction contract in 2009 for the lake and angling access such as roads, boat ramps, parking lots and jetties.

Although four years has passed, the DNR continues to make progress toward completion of the lake project. Relocating the high voltage line and raising the elevation of county road 220<sup>th</sup> Avenue are signs of the DNR’s commitment to the lake project. Partnering with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to construct ponds that capture nutrients and sediments leaving the watershed will help sustain lake water quality. Local fisheries staff has also been active in gathering public support and constructing fish habitat in the lake basin.

It has been 20 years since the DNR made public its plan to acquire land with the intent to construct and develop Lost Grove Lake. This was after the DNR had an independent feasibility study conducted that determined the site, located on Lost Creek and west of county pavement Z30, contained the soil characteristics necessary for dam construction. The DNR completed its land acquisition needs in 2004 after acquiring 1,700 acres from willing sellers. An environmental assessment conducted in 2004 determined that lake construction did not have an adverse impact to wetlands, cultural resources, threatened/endangered species, and to the public.

**For more information, contact Konrad at 515-281-6976.**

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## **FORESTRY OFFICIALS KEEPING TABS ON DESTRUCTIVE INSECTS**

A 2007 surveillance project targeting the emerald ash borer in select Iowa campgrounds frequented by visitors from infested states found no evidence of the pest in Iowa. Unfortunately, a similar project targeting the gypsy moth caught 175 moths from across the state, with the majority coming from eastern Iowa.

The two studies are part of the 2007 Forest Health Summary available Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Bureau website  
<http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/health.html>

Monitoring for emerald ash borer (EAB) in Iowa is a cooperative effort between the DNR's Forestry Bureau, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship State Entomologist Office, Iowa State University Extension, U. S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service.

More than 1,200 trees were visually inspected at all federal, state, private and county campgrounds across Iowa. Officials intentionally stressed more than 200 sentinel trees at campgrounds with the most visitors from EAB infested states to attract insects. These surveys help Iowa to monitor for this insect if it gets transported here in firewood. Movement of firewood from out-of-state visitors has been the main way new populations of this destructive insect have become established. Unfortunately for Pennsylvania and West Virginia, this destructive insect has been found in their ash trees for the first time in 2007. The latest maps and information on this insect is available at  
[www.emeraldashborer.info](http://www.emeraldashborer.info)

Another highlight is the survey for gypsy moths resulted in the second highest catch of this exotic insect in state history. A total of 175 moths were caught across the state, with a significant increase in the eastern counties that are closest (60 to 80 miles) to a reproducing population of gypsy moths. This insect defoliates more than 300 different

tree species during the summer which reduces the amount of energy that a tree can store for next year. This will significantly affect Iowa's oldest trees as they have the most trouble recovering from repeated defoliation events, said Aron Flickinger, special projects forester with the DNR. "The time to prepare forests in northeast Iowa is now," Flickinger said.

District foresters are available to help manage private woodlands for upcoming pest outbreaks like gypsy moth. Find the forester covering map and contact at [www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/district.html](http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/district.html).

Details about how Iowa is monitoring other health issues for our trees like tubakia, tatters, lace bugs, hickory mortality and invasive species can be found in the Forest Health report for Iowa by visiting the following website: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/health.html>

**For more information, contact Flickinger at 515-242-5966.**

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## **GOOD SUPPLIES OF NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS AVAILABLE FOR SPRING**

AMES - The State Forest Nursery, in Ames, has good supplies of Iowa grown tree and shrub seedlings for public and private conservation plantings in Iowa for reforestation, soil erosion control, buffer strips and wildlife habitat.

The nursery currently has good supplies of white, red, bur and swamp white oak, black walnut, silver maple and 43 other species of conifers, hardwood trees and shrubs. "These conservation trees and shrubs are bareroot seedlings from locally collected seed in Iowa," said Roger Jacob, nursery manager. The seedlings range in size from 8 to 24 inches.

State Forest Nursery prices remain unchanged this year, ranging from \$.25 for an 8 to 16-inch conifer, like Norway spruce, to \$.45 for a 17 to 24-inch hardwood tree or shrub, like the oaks. Plants are sold in lots of 100 and a minimum order of 500 plants is required.

"We do have specially developed wildlife packets available for people who want to plant wildlife habitat on a smaller acreage, but do not have the room for 500 plants," Jacob said.

The four special wildlife packets contain 200 trees and shrubs and sells for \$90. A create-your-own packet is available allowing customers to select 50 each of four species of their choice. A turkey packet designed in cooperation with the Iowa Chapter

of the National Wild Turkey Federation contains 50 gray dogwoods, 50 bur, 50 pin, and 50 white oaks for mast production. A pheasant packet contains 50 red cedar, 50 wild plum, 50 ninebark and 50 gray dogwood. A quail packet contains 100 wild plum and 100 gray dogwood. The songbird packet is perfect for that odd corner in a larger backyard and contains 2 bur oak, 2 white pine, 4 wild plum, 4 chokecherry, 4 gray dogwood and 4 serviceberry and sells for \$20 that includes shipping.

To order, contact the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or go online at [www.iowadnr.com/forestry/](http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry/) Credit card orders are accepted.

For more information, contact Roger Jacob or Kandy Weigel, Forestry Bureau State Forest Nursery at 515-233-1168 [Roger.Jacob@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Roger.Jacob@dnr.iowa.gov)

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## DNR OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO BEAT CABIN FEVER

DES MOINES — With the arrival March and clocks moving ahead this weekend, Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many statewide opportunities for Iowans to burn off any remaining cabin fever.

- **Frog and Toad Surveying Opportunity:** Officials with the Wildlife Diversity Program are preparing for volunteers to help with frog and toad surveys that will begin in the spring by offering pre-requisite training workshops throughout the state during March. Currently, trainings are scheduled on March 15 in Center Junction, and March 29 in Maxwell. For more information contact Stephanie Shepherd at 515-432-2823 ext. 102.
- **Campground Host Opportunity:** Officials at state parks throughout the state are seeking volunteers to serve as campground hosts throughout the upcoming camping season. Hosts are offered free on-site camping and assist park staff by greeting campers, answering visitor questions, and completing various maintenance tasks to ensure the camping area is welcoming to the public. State parks currently seeking volunteer hosts include: Elk Rock (Marion Co), Green Valley (Union Co), Lacey-Keosauqua (Van Buren Co), Lake Anita (Cass Co), Lake Ahquabi (Warren Co), Ledges (Boone Co), Palisades-Kepler (Linn Co), Pikes Peak (Clayton Co), Pleasant Creek (Linn Co), Prairie Rose (Shelby Co), and Stephens State Forest (Lucas Co). For more information contact Elizabeth Gull at 515-281-0806.
- **Spring Operation ReLeaf and Plant Some Shade Events:** Spring tree distribution events will be held throughout the state in the following communities: Council Bluffs and Perry on April 12, Davenport and Iowa Falls on April 19, Waterloo on April 24, and Marion on April 26. Volunteers are needed to help with various event set-up and

logistics needs. For more information contact Matt Brewer 515-242-6892 or Jessica Flatt 515-281-6749.

- **Prairie Rescue Events:** Prairie restoration and planting events will be held throughout the state during the spring months in the following communities: Fayette on April 8, Sioux City on April 12, Lehigh on April 18, and Sioux City on April 19. Volunteers are needed to assist with various restoration needs including planting, removal of invasive species, and prairie burning. For more information contact Whitney Davis at 515-281-6271.

A full listing of volunteer opportunities and events is available at [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org).

**For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or [Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov)**

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## **COLORING CONTEST PROMOTES WEARING LIFE JACKETS**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is holding a coloring contest promoting the importance of wearing a life jacket while recreating on the water. The contest is open to children ages 7 to 11 and a copy of the contest picture is available online at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) then click on Safety Education and then Boater Education Program.

The DNR is again partnering with Mustang Survival who is donating five youth life jackets. The winner chosen from each age group will be awarded a life jacket. All entries must be received to the DNR by May 19, 2008. The winners will be announced that week as a part of "National Safe Boating Week."

To qualify for the contest, please put your age on the front of the coloring poster and your name, address and phone number on the back. This will ensure the DNR can accurately put posters in the proper age group and contact the winners.

According to national statistics, 90 percent of all drowning victims died because they were not wearing their life jackets. The DNR is focusing strongly on making Iowa's waterways safer for everyone.

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